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# THE HINDU

**Pre-monsoon rain: a mixed bag for farmers**



It's a mixed bag for farmers as pre-monsoon showers are lashing many districts of Karnataka.

In south Karnataka, sowing began on a positive note this kharif season on account of premonsoon showers. As of May 15, sowing was completed in 1.25 lakh hectares as against the normal coverage of 80,000 hectares.

Farmers have sown tobacco, cotton, jowar, and pulses in Mysuru, Chamarajanagar, Mandya, Hassan, and Tumakuru districts. In contrast, farmers of north Karnataka districts suffered crop damage. Paddy crop on 95,000 hectares was damaged in eight districts of Koppal, Ballari, Raichur, Yadgir, Kalaburagi, Bidar, Vijayapura and Gadag.

The State released Rs. 218 crore to provide compensation to farmers. The loss has been estimated at Rs. 600 crore.

Sowing has not commenced in north Karnataka districts.

About 73 lakh hectares is being targeted for coverage this kharif season.

The State has set an ambitious target of producing 140 lakh tonnes of foodgrains during three crop seasons of 2015-16. Foodgrains production target had been set at 98 lakh tonnes during the kharif, which accounted for over 70 per cent of the annual production.

The State has asked the Centre to ensure supply of 21.5 lakh tonnes of nutrients during the season.

Steps have been taken to procure 10.75 lakh quintals of seeds of different crops. About 4.75 lakh quintals of seeds would be distributed during monsoon and farmers with two acres of land or less get them at subsidised rates.

### **Carry out summer ploughing to capitalise on rain, farmers told**



Better aeration, optimum soil moisture and temperature will make microbes healthier: TNAU

Parts of the district experienced moderate to sharp showers for the third consecutive day on Saturday and for the last 24 hours ending at 8.30 a.m. on Sunday,

Tiruchi town area registered a maximum rainfall of 74 mm followed by Golden Rock 61.60, Nandhiyar Head 48.20, Navalaur Kottapattu 39, Vathalai Anicut 35.20, Kallakudi 31.50, Tiruchi Junction 29.40,

Marungapuri 20.40, Tiruchi Airport area 17.20, Pullampadi 16.80, and Kovilpatti 10.20 mm.

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University's Agricultural College and Research Institute has asked farmers to go in for summer ploughing to capitalise on the showers.

P.Pandiyarajan, dean of the college, said the fertility of soil could be enhanced through summer ploughing.

A team of scientists from the college conducted a study on the absorption rate of rainwater by soil.

The team comprising G.Gomadhi, M.Baskar, L.Chithra and P.Balasubramaniam observed the amount of rainfall realised in the district in general and Tiruchi in particular and had suggested that farmers immediately go in for summer ploughing.

“The increased aeration with optimum soil moisture and temperature would hasten the multiplication of soil microbes and make them healthier,” Mr.Pandiyarajan said.

Ms.Gomadhi said that left out root stubbles, weeds and other crop wastes would, through the process of ploughing, turn into efficacious manure for the next crop season.

Pointing out that Manikandam block in the district accounted for large tracts of sodic-affected fields, Mr.Pandiyarajan said that it would help avoid clearing of weeds through manual operation.

### **Farm women get off to a promising start in animal feed manufacture**

The Amma Farm Women Group based at Vellivalasu, near Arachalur, in Modakurichi taluk has been tasting success in the manufacture of animal feed in recent months.

The group with 20 members has so far manufactured and sold 45 tonnes of high-quality animal feed to farmers in villages in Modakurichi block over the last three months.

The group, which had invested Rs. 10 lakh, has in its possession 20 tonnes of inputs for the sought-after product brand-named CP Animal Feed.

The group has been manufacturing the product with inputs sourced from local farmers with machinery taken on lease. The group had undergone training in the manufacture of the product at the Animal Feed Analytical and Quality Assurance Laboratory, Namakkal, under Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) scheme, Agriculture Department officials said. The group has been able to sell the quality feed at competitive price to farmers.

At a formal inauguration of the product sale on Saturday, Director of Agriculture M. Rajendran accorded a thrust to the group's initiative by recommending bank loan for purchase of machinery for setting up manufacturing and construction of a godown.

In his address, Mr. Rajendran said Tamil Nadu has attained self-sufficiency in food grain production. Widespread soil testing and guidance on use of manure, use of certified seeds, forecast of information pertaining to rainfall and pest attack, and digging of 70,000 farm ponds were among factors contributed to high productivity.

On the income generation initiative by the farm women group, Mr. Rajendran said there were 1,530 Amma Mahalir Pannai Kuzhus initiated under the Department of Agriculture and another 220 under Department of Horticulture.

District Collector S. Prabakar, Modakurichi MLA R.N. Kittusamy, and other senior officials took part. Assuring support to the farm women group, Mr. Prabakar suggested replacement of sugar with molasses in the manufacture process.

There are 32 more farm women groups in the district with the help of which the market base for animal feed will be expanded, Assistant Director of Agriculture, Modakurichi, Kulandaivelu, and Assistant Director of Horticulture in the same block Gunasekaran said.

Direct procurement and direct sale of the animal feed have not only provided the group the cost advantage, the milk yield of animals consuming the product has also increased by 10 to 15 per cent, they said.



## **Turmeric fetches good price at auction**

The weekly turmeric auction at the Tiruchengode Agriculture Producers Cooperative Society here registered a sales turnover of Rs. 1.40 crore on Saturday.

The farmers of Attur, Gengavalli, Koogaiyur, Kallakurichi, Bommidi, Harur, Jaderpalayam, Paramathi Velur, Namakkal, Mettur and Poolampatti had brought 2,500 quintal of turmeric.

While 'Virali' variety fetched a price ranging between Rs. 6,338 and Rs. 9,399; 'Kizhangu' variety fetched a price between Rs. 6,488 and Rs. 7,819 and the 'Panangali' variety between Rs. 7,777 and Rs. 18,699.

The farmers were happy that the turmeric fetched Rs. 400 more per quintal compared to other auction centres.

## **Solar-powered pump set inaugurated in Bidar**



District Central Cooperative Bank will help farmers put up solar-powered irrigation pump sets in the district, Gurupadappa Nagamarapalli, DCC bank president and MLA, said on Sunday.

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development will provide a 40 per cent subsidy to beneficiaries, he said.

He was speaking after inaugurating the first such pump in the field of Jangannath Manikreddy in Chintalgera village. There were no recurring expenses in these units and farmers were guaranteed at least 12 hours of free power, bank officials explained.

Vijay Kumar Patil Gadgi, bank director, D. K Sidram and others were present.

### **Perfect recipes for summer**



A one-day how-to programme on “homemade chocolate and ice-cream making” will be conducted by the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information and Training Centre, on May 19 at No.U-30, 10th Street, Anna Nagar, (Behind Jayagopal Garodia School), from 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

Training certificates, lunch, notes will be given to all participants. For details, call 2626 3484.

## Pride of Kashmir now comes to Kodaikanal



Kodaikanal will from now on share the pride of Kashmir in growing Saffron. A small group of farmers have successfully grown Saffron at Kavunji and Poondi villages on the Upper Kodaikanal hill, thanks to excellent climate and enriched soil condition.

Success of two-year field trial was the outcome of the hardwork and tireless efforts of farmers in these villages, said R. Murthy, former member of the National Horticulture Board and president of the Tamil Nadu Flower Growers Association, who introduced Saffron to farmers in Kodaikanal.

Central Institute of Tropical Crop director Nazir Ahmad was the first to encourage Mr. Murthy to try raising saffron in Kodaikanal at a horticulture training programme for tropical crops and saffron organised by ICAR in Kashmir two years ago. He also gave saffron bulbs [seeds] for field trial.

A group of farmers' along with him raised saffron and conducted a field trial. Now, the results are amazing.

In Kashmir, the size of stigma is half an inch. In Kodaikanal, its size is three fourth of an inch and weight was eight to 10 gm. The group cut the stigma with style from the plant and separate the style and stigma through natural drying. With this success, farmers have planned to go in for mass production.

The plant can survive cold winter, tolerating frost. With no frost in Kodaikanal and prevalence of required temperature, its growth is excellent because of sunlight, Mr. Murthy added.

The saffron was shown to Minister for Agriculture R. Vaidhyalingam and Commissioner (Agriculture Production) Rajesh Lakhoni.

Impressed with the successful field trial, the Minister announced the government's support to the endeavour of progressive saffron growers, while addressing the summer festival function in Kodaikanal.

### **Off-season rain makes delta farmers jittery**

Standing crops from summer paddy to rainfed gingelly in Tiruvarur district could face danger if the rain continues over the next couple of days. While cotton crop is already under threat, any more downpour could spell doom for summer paddy yield.

Although cotton was raised on nearly 5,000 hectares of land in Tiruvarur district during the current season, the crop is at various stages of growth on 3,400 hectares spread over Valangaiman block where cotton was raised on 2,000 hectares and in Koradachery block where it was cultivated on 1,000 hectares.

As for summer paddy raised so far on 20,000 hectares of land in the district, mostly the 80-90 day-old crop is in the vital ear head stage. The crop might have withstood the downpours so far but not any further, farmers and agricultural experts here fear.

The maximum coverage is in Nidamangalam block (9,000 hectares) followed by Mannargudi (4,000 hectares), Valangaiman (2,500 hectares), Kottur (900 hectares), Kodavasal (800 hectares), and Koradachery block where samba paddy is raised on 450 hectares of land.

Farmers take up kuruvai crop only after the summer paddy is harvested in the estimated 24,000 hectares of land.

Rain threatens pulses on over 3,000 hectares of land spread across the district as the black gram crop that form the bulk of the are covered in



Mannargudi, Nidamangalam, and Kottur would suffer significantly lower yield or even a wash out in case of prolonged wettings.

### **Crucial stage**

The Chitrai pattam crop is 25 to 30 days old and is in the vegetative stage and farmers pray that for once the rains would go away for now. Also if there is any downpour at the flowering stage around 30 to 35 days, then there is definite danger. Farmers have mostly given up hopes on salvaging their Gingelly crop on over 500 hectares of land.

Weathermen have posited scattered and moderate rainfall all over Tiruvarur district over the next couple of days. Even on Saturday, there was rain at some places across the district and dark clouds loomed over the region throughout the day.

The chief amount of rainfall (in mm) recorded in major centres in the 24 hours ending 8-30 a.m. on Saturday include Tiruthuraipoondi 92.6, Muthupet 41.2, Kodavasal 33.6, Nannilam 14.2, Tiruvarur 8.20, and Pandavaiyaru Head 6.60 mm.

### **Steep fall in price of flowers**

The steep fall in the price of flowers in the Salem markets, thanks to the heavy arrivals from the rural areas, has caused concern to the farmers. Farmers bring flowers from different parts of the district to VOC Market in the city, a major flower market in the western districts.

The arrival of Jasmine, Gundu Malli and Sanna Malli to the VOC Market from the villages Veeranam, Mecheri, Vaazhakottapatti, and Thottivalasu is on the increase.

Following this, the price of gundu malli has crashed to Rs. 50 per kg on Friday from Rs. 190 last month. The sanna malli, which was priced at Rs. 170 per kg last month, has come down to Rs. 60.

The price of other flowers, too, had registered a downward trend. The price of Kanagambaram was Rs. 160 per kg; Sambangi - Rs. 20; Arali - Rs. 15 – Rs. 20; Kozhikondai - Rs. 20; Button Rose - Rs. 40; Kakkattan flower - Rs. 40 and Colour flower - Rs. 30.

A cross section of the farmers says that there has been a spurt in the production of flowers, thanks to the continuous rainfall. The decrease has badly hit the farmers as the revenue earned is not adequate enough to pay salary to the workers employed in the plucking of flowers.

### **Airport grounds farmers' hopes**



With anger and desperation, Bharat Ruidas (30), an agricultural worker and a supporter of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), describes his ordeal in finding a job. Mr. Ruidas, of Dakshin Khanda village in the Andal block in Bardhaman district, lost his source of income from farming in 2008 when his father gave one acre of land for the construction of an airport at Andal, which is scheduled to become operational on Monday.

He alleged that ever since the Trinamool Congress came to power in West Bengal in May 2011, the party cadres had been preventing him from finding employment.

“When I go to any factory for a job, Trinamool leaders instruct their trade unions to ensure that I do not get any job there,” he told *The Hindu*. An unemployed Mr. Ruidas can barely make ends meet for his joint family of 11.

**‘Future uncertain’**

“The future of my brother’s two daughters who study in school has become uncertain,” he says. The Rs. 7 lakh the family received for the land cannot sustain them much longer.

Mr. Ruidas is among nearly 8,000 agricultural workers who lost their source of income after the land acquisition during the Left Front government. So far, about 1,800 acres of land has been acquired in seven villages in the district’s Andal block and six villages in the Faridpur-Durgapur block in west Bardhaman. The local CPI(M) leadership says the land acquisition was peaceful, but problems started after the Trinamool came to power.

## **Trinamool**

### **denies charge**

However, Trinamool MLA from Raniganj, Md. Sohrab Ali has termed the allegations as “baseless and politically motivated.” He also claimed that every person whose livelihood was affected by the project received due compensation.

Manik Ruidas, another agricultural worker and CPI (M) supporter of Dakhin Khanda village, made similar allegations. Manik Ruidas lost his job after the land owner he worked for gave the land for the project. He had no choice but to work as a daily wage worker.

“It is very difficult to sustain my family with such a little income. Perhaps I will have to discontinue my son’s education,” he said.

Not only were agricultural labourers involved with the CPI (M) being prevented by Trinamool cadres from getting other jobs, the government allegedly did not provide compensation for the landless agricultural labourers. Each family was supposed to get 250 days of minimum agricultural wage (Rs 130 per day) prevalent during the time of acquisition. Locals said that as per the stipulation every family of such workers should have got about Rs. 32,000. “But we got nothing,” said Mr. Manik Ruidas.

Sudhir Sinha, a CPI(M) supporter and a land owner from Khandra village, whose one acre of land was acquired for the project alleged that many others like him did not get developed land in the vicinity of the project as per the stipulations of the acquisition. “Now I can barely sustain my family with my small business,” he said.

### **Three-day Flower Show concludes in Oot**

The Defence Service Staff College (DSSC) in Wellington retained the prestigious Governor's Rolling Cup for "Garden of the Year" in the 119th edition of the three-day Ooty Flower show, which concluded on Sunday.

The Nilgiris District Collector P. Sankar gave away the trophy during the valedictory function.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Ever Rolling Gold Cup for 'Bloom of the Show' went to Sterling Biotech in Sandynallah, Ooty.

The A.V.Thomas Ever Rolling Cup for Most Outstanding Plantation went to Krithya Jayaraman of Havukal Estate in Kotagiri.

The DSSC Ever Rolling Cup for large private garden (above 10,000 sq.m.) went to Elissamma Thomas of The Abode, Kappathorai.

As many as 237 participants took part in the Showday Competition besides 185 for the garden competition. A special prize for stall arrangements was also given.

Delivering the presidential address, Mr. Sankar said that more than 1.25 lakh roses were used to construct the model of Taj Mahal for the flower show.

Two flower models of angry birds were also erected.

It also featured the national flowers of 106 countries besides 20 varieties of flowers imported from Kenya, the Netherlands, South Africa and South American countries.

Over 15,000 potted plants were also kept on display this year.

### **Moderate rainfall in The Nilgiris**

Moderate rainfall on Saturday kept tourists at bay and forced them to undergo hardships across The Nilgiris.



On Saturday, the district received an average 18.94 mm rainfall. Udthagamandalam recorded highest rainfall of 45 mm. The lowest rainfall was recorded at Kinnakorai (1 mm).

Rainfall recorded in other places in the district is as follows: Coonoor – 5 mm, G. bazaar – 12 mm, K. Bridge – 6 mm, Ketti – 35 mm, Kothagiri – 23 mm, Naduvattam – 23 mm, Kallaty – 20 mm, Glenmorgan – 24 mm,

Upper Bhavani – 33 mm, Emerald – 10 mm, Avalanche – 28 mm, Geddai – 7 mm, Kodanadu – 10 mm, Devala – 26 mm and Burliar – 14 mm.

In Coimbatore district, rainfall recorded in south Coimbatore was 4 mm and at airport it was 1.4 mm. Pollachi recorded the highest (19 mm) and at Mettupalayam, it was 6.4 mm.

### **Curbing the menace of artificial ripening of mangoes**



Hardly has the mangoes season begun, the markets are already flooded with artificially ripened fruits. It is also the time when food safety officials get busy conducting raids and issuing public awareness messages.

S.D. Balakrishnan, designated officer in the Department of Food Safety, said with assistance of municipal staff and revenue officials, we are conducting frequent raids on godowns of fruit vendors and seize the artificially ripened

fruits. As the law permits us to impose penalty on the erring vendors, we will impose heavy fines on those attempting to artificially ripen the fruits.”

Mangoes are one of the best natural food usually consumed raw. These mangoes during ripening undergo physiological and bio-chemical changes which make them edible, palatable and nutritious. During this irreversible process, the fruits become soft, change in colour and develop characteristic aroma and flavour. There is also reduction in sourness and increase in sweetness of the fruit. All these changes are induced by the production of ethylene gas during natural ripening.

However, the lure of the quick buck has led to unscrupulous agents using calcium carbide stones as artificial ripening agent to capitalise on the high demand for mangoes.

Calcium carbide is carcinogenic and is normally used for generating acetylene gas during gas welding process. About a kilogram of calcium carbide which costs less than Rs. 50 can ripen around 10 ton of fruits.

Calcium carbide is notorious for cancer-causing properties and also contains traces of Arsenic and Phosphorous Hydrides which make can render the fruits highly toxic if consumed. When calcium carbide crystals are kept in and around the pile of fruits folded in paper packets or cloth bags, they absorb moisture from the surrounding atmosphere and produce acetylene gas which aid in the artificial ripening process.

The fruits are sent to distant places requiring several days for transportation and only firm and mature fruits are least damaged during marketing. Fruit traders pluck them when they are raw so as to keep the fruits long enough to sell them off before they rot. This is where artificial ripening plays a role in giving a ripe look to fruits much earlier than the normal period of seven to ten days that it takes the fruit to undergo ripening process naturally.

The long duration taken for natural ripening is a loss for some traders as they have to store the fruits for a longer period resulting in monetary loss. Hence they resort to artificial ripening, officials said.

Food Safety Officer I. Danaraju said, “Fruits ripened with calcium carbide are overly soft, are inferior in taste and flavour. They also have a shorter shelf-life.”

## **Corrosive chemical**

Calcium carbide is a corrosive chemical with carcinogenic properties. The hydride of Arsenic and Phosphorus present in the calcium carbide cause vomiting, diarrhoea with or without blood, burning sensation of chest and abdomen, thirst, weakness, difficulty in swallowing, irritation in the eyes and skin, permanent eye damage, ulcers on the skin, sore throat, cough and shortness of breath. Higher exposure may cause a build-up of fluids in the lungs.

Consumption of fruits ripened with calcium carbide causes stomach upset by eroding the mucosal tissues in the stomach and disrupts intestinal functions. It also affects neurological system by reduced supply of oxygen to body tissues and organs resulting in headache, dizziness, mood disturbances, drowsiness, mental confusion, memory loss, swelling in the brain caused by excessive fluids and seizure.

### **‘Lucknow 49’ records fair growth**

A guava variety, ‘Lucknow 49’ raised on the campus of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Horticulture College for Women and Research Institute at Navalur Kuttapattu near here, has registered a fair growth, indicating its adaptability to the sodic soil in the area.

The planting of this guava variety was taken up as part of raising high density guava cultivation to sensitise horticultural farmers to enhance yield through good agricultural practices.

The pilot project, taken up under the National Agriculture Innovation Project of the Indian Council of Agriculture and Research, aims at raising 2,222 saplings of guava against the usual 500 on one hectare under the conventional method.

The experiment, which was taken up about a year ago, has now started giving the yield.

About five kg of fruits were being harvested from each tree, said P. Pandiyarajan, Dean of the college. The objective is to promote export-oriented fruits.

The Dean said that a few varieties were raised earlier, including “Allahabad” variety and ‘Lucknow 47’. But it was only the ‘Lucknow 49’ variety which has withstood the sodic nature of the soil on the campus, he said. In course of time, the yield would be 20 kg a tree.

“Both the quality and the quantity of the fruit improves,” he added.



# THE TIMES OF INDIA

**One year of Modi govt: Monsoon could keep relief out of farm's way**



One year may not be enough to judge a government's performance in a sector like agriculture which had been neglected for years despite being the prime source of income for almost half of the country's population. Steps taken in last 12 months have raised hopes for the sector.

Be it strengthening or creating irrigation networks, distribution of soil health cards for nutrient-based decisions to increase productivity, bringing an income-linked farm insurance scheme or a plan for a barrier-free National Agriculture Market, these measures will show results in the next couple of years.

This will happen if the country doesn't encounter weather-linked roadblocks. Last year's deficit monsoon was the first big challenge before the new government.



## **Complete coverage: One year of Modi sarkar**

The Centre had taken contingency measures and reduced the impact of low rainfall on summer crops. Consequently, India recorded only 3% deficit in foodgrain production despite 12% deficit rainfall.

Unseasonal rain in March damaged winter crops (Rabi) on 189.81 lakh hectares and presented another challenge.

It didn't end there.

When the government is trying to reduce the impact of natural disasters on farmers, raising compensation, restructuring loans and speedy disbursement of insurance, it's now landed at the doorsteps of a third similar challenge. The weatherman has predicted 'below normal' rainfall this monsoon as well.

The Centre may be able to deal with it again through contingency measures such as a diesel subsidy, making seeds available at subsidized rates and sharing useful generic information with tillers about rainfall distribution and crop choice. But, the question arises, will the farm sector which provides direct and indirect jobs to the majority of the workforce run on ad-hoc measures and through firefighting operations?

Will India be able to deal with weather-linked crises taking long-term measures?

Union agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh told TOI his government was committed to bringing structural changes in agriculture and allied sectors that have faced decades of neglect. "We've initiated measures that are at different stages of implementation. Their impact may not be felt immediately but the results of these actions would be far-reaching in terms of increasing productivity and improving the lot of farmers," he said.

Agriculture and allied sectors account for 17.2% of GDP and 14% of overall exports. Yet, nearly half the total agricultural land (181.98 million hectares) doesn't have any irrigation, leaving farmers at the mercy of rains. Since 85% of farmers have less than two hectares of the land each with no other source of livelihood, adverse weather conditions make the situation worse.

## **One year of Modi sarkar: Share your views**

There are issues that depend on policy intervention at central and state levels. These include finalizing minimum support price (MSP) for major foodgrain based on input-output pricing and the cost-risk-return structure, timely procurement of farmers' produce and export-import regulations that play a critical role in deciding the farmers' income.

Singh, however, said, "Since agriculture is a state subject, success of these schemes will depend on sincerity of states. The Centre has formulated many schemes and released funds to states for implementation."

## **Industry body offers land for incubation centre for startups**

Following the Chamber of Marathwada Industries and Agriculture's (CMIA) plan to set up an incubation centre for start-ups, the MIDC has extended support with an offer to make land available for the project.

The CMIA project aims to provide budding entrepreneurs with tools that are generally very expensive and to boost domestic manufacturing of electronics in the city. MIDC deputy chief executive officer Anand Raite said the government would extend all support to the project.

Raite was speaking at the Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) meet organised by CMIA at Marathwada Auto Cluster, Waluj, on Sunday.

"CMIA has proposed to set up the incubation centre in Waluj industrial area with an aim to nurture start-up entrepreneurs. The centre would provide platform to budding entrepreneurs to implement innovative ideas and pilot projects," said CMIA vice-president Ashish Garde.

He said, "The Centre would not only provide infrastructure, but also enable access to domain experts, mentors, shared consultants and services. It will help tap the potential from the student community and start up entrepreneurs and promote entrepreneurial thinking, creating business leaders in all spheres of life."

Ashok Chandak, past President India Electronics and Semiconductor Association, meanwhile spoke about the electronics policy for ESDM sector growth. "Aurangabad is a favourable destination to set up Brown field electronics cluster," he said.

"Basically, CMIA's objective is to provide support structure to ESDM sector in this region with world class design, manufacturing, testing and training in the field of electronics so that local ESDM fraternity will be capable of innovation, product development and manufacturing of electronic products as per Central Government's 'Make In India' plan," said CMIA president Munish Sharma.

"Corporate sector is invited to join, invest and strengthen ecosystem of electronics in this region from skill development in academics, supply chain, strengthening in SME manufacturing network to attracting global Electronics MNC's to Aurangabad," said Suresh Todkar, convenor of ESDM meet.

Vice-chancellor of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University (BAMU), B A Chopde, said that the varsity would also extend all support to the Brown Field Cluster, which in turn would foster academic growth. He also called for more industry-academia interaction.

CMIA has urged successful industry houses of Aurangabad in different sectors like auto to expand their horizons in fastest growing electronic sector and appealed to academics to work jointly with the cluster to create world class innovations at institute level.

## THE HINDU BusinessLine

### **Planters' body opposes Spices Board decision to close down Wayanad office**

The Association of Planters of Kerala (APK) has objected to the decision of the Spices Board to close down its offices in Wayanad.

The move would put the farmers in further crisis, as they are already reeling under unremunerative prices of other agricultural commodities, APK said.

According to APK, the famous ‘Malabar Gold’ – the pepper produced from Kerala which was fetching a premium in the international market -- will become a thing of the past, if measures are not taken to revive and rejuvenate pepper cultivation in Wayanad as well as in Idukki.

The last seven years have shown a decline of 50 per cent in area and 60 per cent in the production of pepper cultivation in Kerala. The main reason attributed to this decline is climate change, pest and diseases and high cost of production.

During this crisis period, APK said that farmers were expecting technical advisories and financial support from the board. However, the decision by the Spices Board at best can be termed as myopic, which will become a factor for the slow death of this world famous geographically identified Malabar Gold, C. Vinayaraghavan, Chairman, APK, said.

The planters’ body also sought the intervention of State and Union Government to restore the functions of the two offices without any further delay.

It has also urged the Spices Board to continue with the research on varieties which are “drought and quick wilt” resistant specifically for Wayanad conditions as well as extending monetary and technical advisory support for farmers in the region.

### **Monsoon winds in Bay riding crest of Pacific super typhoon Dolphin**

The onset of southwest monsoon over south Andaman Sea last (Saturday) night was masterminded by raging super typhoon Dolphin in the northwest Pacific.

The super typhoon is now the predominant weather system under the command area of the larger Asian monsoon and has been instrumental in ratcheting up wind speeds over not just the northwest Pacific but also the Indian Ocean.

What it does is pull the monsoon winds off the equator and guide them in as they turn in from a southwesterly direction off the Somali coast (Arabian Sea arm of the monsoon) and south Bay of Bengal (Bay arm).

Large Pacific and Indian ocean basins spanning tens of thousands of sq km form apart form an extended area of influence under a single monsoon system for all practical purposes.

This is why the southwest monsoon is considered a planetary phenomenon, the largest and most spectacular arm of which is the one that plays over the Indian subcontinent.

The onset phase in the Bay is forecast to hold strong over the next two to three days in tandem with the peaking of the super typhoon.

The system would start weakening to the south of Japan when the activity over the Bay of Bengal is forecast to peak over.

Wind speeds in the central Bay of Bengal would have touched beyond 50 km/hr before this happens, forecast outlook says.

During this phase, heavy to very heavy rains over south peninsular India would have shifted to northeast India and adjoining east India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and adjoining western Thailand.

Winds are forecast to wind down over the Bay by May 23/24 and heavy rain over south peninsula would lift by that time.

The cross-equatorial monsoon flows that turn off the Somali coast and those in the Bay may start picking up again post May 25, as per these forecasts.



# Business Standard

New Urea Policy alters energy math, encourages production: CRISIL



The new urea policy announced by the Cabinet on Monday might not be uniformly beneficial for industry. The policy tightens energy consumption norms and aims to increase production by two million tonnes. This, said a CRISIL report, would have a mixed impact.

While the new norms on energy savings would be a credit negative, as these reduce the profit on production up to a specified cut-off capacity, profit can be higher for production beyond that threshold. The policy was announced for the next four financial years. It is aimed at maximising indigenous urea production and promoting energy efficiency in units to reduce the subsidy burden on the government.

“It will enable the domestic urea sector having 30 urea producing units, to become more energy efficient, would rationalise the subsidy burden and incentivise urea units to maximise their production at the same time,” said a government statement.

It is expected to result in additional production of around 2 million metric tonnes annually. Presently, India is importing about 8 million metric tonnes of urea out of total demand of 31 million metric tonnes.

The new policy is yet to be notified but the government estimates subsidysavings of Rs 2,600 crore in four years by resetting energy consumption norms. There will also be indirect savings of Rs 2,211 crore (total savings will be Rs 4,829 crore) on account of revised specific energy consumption norms and import substitution respectively during the next four years.

The negative impact of the policy will depend on what norms are applicable for each unit and the scope for further efficiencies. The positive impact will depend on capacity utilisation, specifically, the extent of production possible and fixed-subsidy allocated per tonne in order to incentivise production. So far, urea manufacturers have benefitted because their energy consumption has been less than the norms set by the government.

According to CRISIL, this will be directly mopped up from the bottomlines of urea manufacturers as stricter norms will translate into lower gains from energy savings unlike before. However, the policy will push manufacturers to further enhance their energy efficiencies.

Urea production can be divided into two parts: production up to cut-off capacity (nearly 90 per cent of domestic capacities) and production beyond cut-off capacity (nearly 10 per cent of domestic capacities)

For production beyond cut-off, the prevailing subsidy was linked to import-parity prices of urea. But in the last financial year, import-parity price fell, domestic natural-gas prices rose, and consumption of imported re-gasified liquefied natural gas (RLNG) increased because of which the production beyond cut-off capacity profit had dried up for most manufacturers. Depending on the domestic-imported gas mix, and the absence of any change in policy, production beyond cut-off had become unviable for some manufacturers.

CRISIL said the New Urea Policy aims to increase domestic output by encouraging production beyond cut-off. But the extent of increase in profits can be ascertained only when the fixed subsidy for it, if any, is known.

The increase in profit will largely offset the impact of tightening of energy norms for production up to cut-off. And fixed subsidy for production beyond cut-off capacity will add to stability in cash flows. For urea manufacturers that haven't revamped their plants and do not produce beyond 100 per cent capacity, the policy will largely be negative.

Among the companies that are likely to be impacted by the policy are Chambal Fertilisers and Chemicals Limited, Indian Farmers Fertilisers Co-operative Limited, KRIBHCO Shyam Fertilizers Limited, Krishak Bharati Cooperative Limited, Mangalore Chemicals and Fertilizers Limited, National Fertilizers Limited, Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers and Tata Chemicals Limited.

Earlier the government had approved gas pooling policy under which gas was provided to all urea units at a uniform price. It had decided in January to allow urea producers to produce neem coated urea up to 100 per cent of production and making it mandatory to produce a minimum of 75 per cent of domestic urea as neem coated, so that farmers are benefitted.

Neem coated urea gives higher crop yields and is not required in high quantities while using the same plot size as other urea variants. Underground water contamination due to leaching of urea also gets reduced since nitrogen in the neem coated urea gets gradually released to plants. This variant of urea is not fit for industrial use, so chances of its illegal diversion to industries will also be lesser.

The market retail price (MRP) of urea for the farmers has been kept the same at Rs 268 for a 50kg bag, excluding local taxes. Farmers have to pay an additional price of only Rs 14 a bag of neem coated urea.

The government decided to continue the existing subsidy rates for phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilisers (22 grades including DAP, single super phosphate (SSP), muriate of potash (MOP) etc.) under the Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) policy for the current year. Subsidy rate for DAP remains same at Rs 12350 a metric tonne while it is Rs 9300 for MOP. Separate subsidy for boron and zinc coated fertilisers has also been continued.

There are 19 units producing phosphatic fertilisers and 103 units making

SSP. The entire requirement (approximately 30 lakh Metric Tonnes) of MOP is met from imports, since there is no resource of potash in India. About 90 per cent of the phosphates are imported.